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**Optimization of Optical and Electronic properties of Carbon  
Fullerenes: Symmetry-Reduced C<sub>60</sub> and Dumbbell-Like Novel  
Structures**

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### **Abstract:**

Using quantum chemical density functional calculations, we study two possible pathways for manipulating the optical and electronic properties of all-carbon fullerenes structures. In the first, the optical properties of  $C_{60}$  are shown to be enhanced via reduction of the perfectly spherical  $I_h$  symmetry structure to energetically feasible lower symmetries. A  $D_{3d}$  symmetry structure of  $C_{60}$  proved to be 39 meV lower in energy than the  $I_h$  conformation. This reduction in symmetry activates otherwise silent modes in the IR and Raman spectra, possibly achievable via solvation effects. In the second pathway, fusing a building block of an-all carbon hexagonal unit as a connector between two  $C_{60}$  cages is considered. Optimizations on a resulting series of dumbbell-like structures, molecular  $C_{126}$ ,  $C_{132}$ ,  $C_{138}$ ,  $C_{144}$ , and  $C_{180}$ , impart distinct variation in the electronic properties of these novel structures with size. These structures are further shown to support stable anionic radical forms.

## I. Introduction.

Optimization of the electronic, optical, and magnetic properties of nanomaterials to a desired outcome is recognized as a prime objective for major advancements in nanotechnology. [1] For example, new developments in carbon fullerene doping have attracted much interest due to expectation of novel chemical and physical properties when varying the amount of dopant in fullerene cages. [2] Several doping methods currently exist for altering the electronic structure of the parent fullerenes. [3] These methods of synthesis are accomplished either by introducing dopant species to surround the fullerene cage, or by the inclusion of ions inside it. Another approach is the substitution of one or more of the carbon atoms with dopants.  $C_{48}N_{12}$  is an example of several recently synthesized molecular systems in which the carbon atoms in the  $C_{60}$  cage are replaced either by nitrogen or boron counterparts. [3-7] Compared to  $C_{60}$ ,  $C_{48}N_{12}$  showed an enhancement of its second hyperpolarizability by about 55%, making it a good candidate for optical limiting applications. [8] It was also shown that  $C_{48}N_{12}$  could be used to build diamagnetic materials due to its enhanced diamagnetic shielding factor in the carbon atom. [9] Moreover, computation of electron acceptor  $C_{48}B_{12}$  and donor  $C_{48}N_{12}$  demonstrated these materials to be promising components for molecular rectifiers, carbon nanotube-based *n-p-n* (*p-n-p*) transistors and *p-n* junctions. [10-11]

Aside from introducing heterogeneity into the system, it is possible to fine-tune the electronic properties by manipulating the structural attributes in a homogeneous nanomaterials. Such is the case in carbon nanotubes, which could be made as metals

or semiconductors, depending on the diameter and the chirality of the nanotube. [12] In this work, our aim is to explore altering the optical and electronic properties of carbon fullerenes *without* the introduction of a foreign agent or dopant. Using quantum chemical calculations, we establish two possible pathways to manipulate and optimize the optical and electronic properties of all-carbon fullerenes structures. In the first, the optical properties of  $C_{60}$  are shown to be enhanced via reduction of the perfectly spherical  $I_h$  symmetry structure to energetically feasible lower symmetries. [13] Experimentally, this symmetry reduction is thought to be demonstrated for  $C_{60}$  in benzene, toluene, and  $CS_2$  solutions. [14, 15] In the second, we consider adding a building block, an-all carbon hexagonal unit, as a connector between two  $C_{60}$  molecules. Optimizations on such a series of dumbbell-like structures of increasing size, with molecular formulas  $C_{126}$ ,  $C_{132}$ ,  $C_{138}$ ,  $C_{144}$ , and  $C_{180}$  (figure3), show distinct variation in the electronic properties of these novel structures that they might serve as new optoelectronic materials.

## II. Enhanced Optical Activity of Symmetry-Reduced $C_{60}$ .

Ever since its discovery in 1985, the celebrated geodesic cage structure of the  $C_{60}$  molecule has become one of the rare examples of perfect symmetry structures in nature. [16] A truncated icosahedron, in which all sixty vertices are equivalent,  $C_{60}$  possesses the full  $I_h$  symmetry, thus making it the most spherical of all known molecules. [17] Inherent in this high symmetry is an intricate network of electron-phonon coupling, evident in phonon progressions and vibronic peak broadening, [18] and resulting in structural distortions of neutral  $C_{60}$  in the presence of solvent. [14,15,19] Within the  $I_h$  symmetry group, there are forty-six distinct vibrational

frequencies, with the following symmetries:  $\Gamma = 2A_g + 3T_{1g} + 4T_{2g} + 6G_g + 8H_g + A_u + 4T_{1u} + 5T_{2u} + 6G_u + 7H_u$ . Ten modes are Raman-active and four are IR-active (in the first order), while the remaining 32 modes are optically silent. [12] As the symmetry of  $C_{60}$  is reduced from  $I_h$  to, say,  $D_{3d}$ , the number of distinct vibrational modes increase to 116, having the following symmetries:  $\Gamma = 16A_{1g} + 13A_{2g} + 29E_g + 14A_{1u} + 15A_{2u} + 29E_u$ . Symmetry-reduced structures of  $C_{60}$  would activate some of the otherwise silent  $I_h$  modes, which could then be amenable to experimental verification as in resonance Raman scattering. [20-21]

We performed quantum chemical calculations, at the density functional B3LYP and BPW91 levels, [22-26], and with two different basis sets, on symmetry constrained structures of  $C_{60}$ :  $I_h$ ,  $T_h$ ,  $D_{5d}$ ,  $D_{3d}$ , and  $S_6$ . Results of optimization within these symmetry constraints proved, consistently, that the  $D_{3d}$  structure is the lowest in energy at all levels of theory, being about 35-39 meV even lower than the  $I_h$  symmetry constrained molecule, as listed in Table I. Although for practical purposes these structures could be considered as energetically degenerate, a new assignment of the ground electronic state of  $C_{60}$  should now be as the  $^1A_{1g}$  state of  $D_{3d}$  symmetry.

Figure 1 shows the optimized structure of the lowest energy  $D_{3d}$  symmetric  $C_{60}$  at the B3LYP/6-31G\* level of computation. Within this symmetry, there are 10 unique carbon-carbon bonds. Optimization of the  $I_h$  structure at the same level yields 1.454 and 1.396 Å for the two unique C-C bonds, to be compared with neutron scattering average values of 1.455 and 1.391 Å. [27] Note that the diffraction results are averages for three sets of values comprising of fifteen measured bonds. The  $D_{3d}$  optimized structure has four short bonds in the range 1.396-1.410 Å, and six long

bonds within the range 1.447-1.459 Å. These values illustrate only small distortions from the  $I_h$  structure, consistent with the slight energy change reported in Table I. The  $C_{60}$  molecule transitions from a spherical top form in the  $I_h$  symmetry to a prolate symmetric top form in the  $D_{3d}$  symmetry structure. This symmetry lowering thus produces a slight, anisotropic change in the quadrupole moment from  $\sigma = -324.09$  (Debye-Å) in  $I_h$  symmetry, to  $\sigma_{XX} = \sigma_{YY} = -324.09$ ,  $\sigma_{ZZ} = -324.15$  in the  $D_{3d}$  structure, as calculated at this level of theory. It should be noted that a change in the quadrupole moment has been predicted in order to account for an observed solvatochromism shifts of  $C_{60}$ . [28]

Re-organization among these various symmetry structures can thus occur easily through tunneling, when exposed to external perturbations such as solvent environment. It is interesting to note that similar  $D_{3d}$  and  $D_{5d}$  lower energy structures; Jahn-Teller distortions in the  $C_{60}$  anion radical have been predicted. [29] Transitions between neutral and anionic  $C_{60}$ , both of which are now geometrically of  $D_{3d}$  symmetry, is very favorable according to the Franck-Condon principle. Further, with the full vibrational structure of  $I_h$ ,  $D_{3d}$ , and  $D_{5d}$  symmetry calculated, the  $D_{3d}$  structure has the largest zero-point energy of 10.20 eV, compared with 10.18 eV for the  $I_h$  structure at the B3LYP/6-31G\* level.

A consequence of symmetry lowering is the splitting of electronic molecular energy levels. The highest occupied state of  $C_{60}$  in  $I_h$  symmetry is the completely occupied, five-fold degenerate  $h_u$  state, while the lowest unoccupied state is the three-fold degenerate  $t_{1u}$  state. The energy band gap between the HOMO and LUMO states is calculated to be 2.76 eV at the B3LYP/6-31G\* level. In  $D_{3d}$  symmetry, the  $h_u$  state



splits into one  $A_{2u}$  and two doubly degenerate  $E_u$  states, separated by  $24\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The  $t_{1u}$  LUMO state splits into  $A_{2u}$  and  $E_u$ , with the  $A_{2u}$  mode being  $18\text{ cm}^{-1}$  lower in energy at this level of calculation. The HOMO-LUMO separation is then an  $E_u$ - $E_u$  gap in  $D_{3d}$  symmetry, equal to that of the  $I_h$  symmetry. The level splitting in this symmetry causes both the HOMO and LUMO to be shifted higher in energy by an almost similar magnitude.

The calculated Raman scattering activities for the  $I_h$  and  $D_{3d}$  symmetry structures at the B3LYP/6-31G\* level is shown in Figure 2. In  $I_h$  symmetry, two  $A_g$  and eight  $H_g$  fundamental vibrational modes are Raman active, altogether with combination and overtone modes, have been experimentally assigned for the solid phase. [30] The calculated and measured frequencies are shown to be in good agreement. In  $D_{3d}$  symmetry, the  $H_g$  mode correlates with one  $A_{Ig}$  and two  $E_g$  modes. The calculated Raman activities show very small splitting of the active modes: the lowest frequency  $H_g$  mode at  $265\text{ cm}^{-1}$  splits into two modes at  $266$  and  $267\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Similar splitting for all other active modes at  $434$ ,  $715$ ,  $786$ ,  $1125$ ,  $1275$ ,  $1453$ , and  $1616\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , with a frequency shift of at most  $3\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is calculated for the  $D_{3d}$  symmetry structure. Similar results have been obtained for the calculated Raman activities of the  $D_{5d}$  structure, for which the  $H_g$  mode splits into the  $A_{Ig}$ ,  $E_{Ig}$  and  $E_{2g}$  modes. For this structure, the only active modes in the region of up to  $500\text{ cm}^{-1}$  are determined for the bands at  $266$ ,  $436$ , and  $497\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .

The Raman spectrum of  $D_{3d}$   $C_{60}$  in Figure 2 shows a weak band at  $1539\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . This is due to the activation of otherwise silent mode, and of  $A_{Ig}$  character. Two much weaker  $E_g$  modes also appear at  $1538\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Experimentally, a silent  $G_g$  band at

1525  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  has been assigned in  $I_h$  symmetry. In  $D_{3d}$  symmetry, this mode should correlate with the  $A_{1g}$ ,  $A_{2g}$ , and  $E_g$  modes, of which only the  $A_{1g}$  and  $E_g$  are Raman active. The appearance of this band in a region significantly removed from other fundamentals should, therefore, be a Raman signature for the existence of this structure and could be discerned in high-resolution Raman spectroscopy of  $C_{60}$  in the gas-phase. The existence of two  $H_g$  overtones in the same region, however, could prove its identification a challenging case indeed. [30]

The four IR-active  $T_{1u}$  modes in the  $I_h$  symmetry are calculated at the B3LYP/6-31G\* level to have frequencies of 532, 587, 1212, and 1459  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . These also compare well with the experimental measurements of 527, 576, 1183, and 1430  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . [31] The small distortions into  $D_{3d}$  symmetry shift these frequencies to higher values of at most 5  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . Two weak bands are activated: one with frequencies of 541, 543  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , and a weaker still band at 1465  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The first could be attributed to the  $I_h$   $H_u$  silent mode at the experimentally assigned 563 band, while the second emanates from the silent  $G_u$  band, appearing with frequency of 1446  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . [31] Previous assignments of weak IR modes, specifically in the high frequency region, as due to combination modes caused by anharmonicity may well in fact be originated from a geometrical change of  $C_{60}$  to the lower  $D_{3d}$  symmetry. [32]

### III. Dumbbell-Like Novel Structures.

The discovery of polymerized  $C_{60}$  has ignited an interest in the subject of electronic interactions between adjacent  $C_{60}$  cages. [33,34] Dimeric form of  $C_{60}$  has received a particular attention as a model of fullerene polymers, with interest in

understanding how the close contact of curved  $\pi$ -conjugated structures might influence the electronic properties of the overall cluster. One early example was the synthesis of an odd-numbered fullerenes,  $C_{119}$  [35] and  $C_{121}$  [36,37]. In a related venue, ladder-shaped molecules featuring a series of fused cyclobutane rings (dubbed as ladderanes) have also been achieved [38], with expected unique electronic properties that they may serve as spacers to separate metals or functional groups for a possible new class of active optoelectronic materials.

Instead of a butane ring, consider a carbon hexagon, benzene-like unit (as in graphite, for example), to be a building block, when fused, for a series of connectors between two  $C_{60}$  cages. Since it is known that there is a bond between the bridgehead carbon atoms of a 6,6-junction, and not between a 6,5 junction, [39] the hexagon unit is fused to two six-membered rings of the  $C_{60}$  cages. We determine the variation in electronic properties, at the B3LYP/6-31G\* level of computation. Mainly, we calculate the HOMO-LUMO gap, for a series of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 10 fused units, leading to structures shown in figure 3, of  $C_{126}$ ,  $C_{132}$ ,  $C_{138}$ ,  $C_{144}$ , and  $C_{180}$ . Such structures might also be considered as closed-curved, fused ladderanes, creating a connector tube of various lengths between two buckyballs.

Optimization of these structures, all with  $D_{3h}$  symmetry, resulted in distinct carbon-carbon bonding characteristics. Within the  $C_{60}$  cages, C-C bond distances are similar to the ones reported for the  $I_h$  and  $D_{3d}$  structures discussed in the previous section and vary in length between the two values 1.40 and 1.45 Å, reflecting little or no perturbation. Within the hexagonal unit, however, the optimized C-C bonds are 1.52 and 1.54 Å, representing mainly single C-C bonds, very similar to what is found

in ethane ( $C_2H_6$ ). The bridging bonds, either between the  $C_{60}$  and the hexagon unit, or between two adjacent hexagon units are further stretched to 1.60 to 1.62 Å. Such values represent a further weakening of inter-connector C-C bonds, the sort of highly compressed, inter-layer graphitic sheets. Finally, the length of the tube between two  $C_{60}$  in  $C_{180}$  is about 17.75 Å.

Table II lists the calculated HOMO-LUMO, gap and binding energies of the series  $C_{126}$ ,  $C_{132}$ ,  $C_{138}$ ,  $C_{144}$ , and  $C_{180}$ , and compare them with that of  $C_{60}$ . The calculated binding energy decreases monotonically with the size of the carbon cluster, from 6.87 for  $C_{126}$  to 6.38 eV per atom for  $C_{180}$ . These values are 0.11 to 0.6 eV/atom less than that of  $C_{60}$ , suggesting that these structures are amenable to synthesis. While fusing the initial hexagon unit lowers the binding energy by 0.11 eV/atom, successive additions decreases this value further in comparison with  $C_{60}$ . As determined from the results in table II, the binding energy variation is 0.095 eV/atom per unit for  $C_{132}$ , 0.083 eV/atom per unit for  $C_{136}$ , and 0.06 per unit for  $C_{180}$ .

As for the electronic properties, the calculated energy gap between the HOMO and LUMO molecular orbitals for the series of structures are displayed in figure 4. We notice appreciable decrease, albeit non-monotonic, in the energy gap from that of  $C_{60}$ . The calculated gap for  $C_{60}$  is determined to be 2.76 eV, and is in agreement with the experimental value of  $2.3 \pm 0.1$  eV of the solid phase. [40] Thus, the level of computation with B3LYP/6-31G\* gives a reasonable predictive capability, as noted previously on other spectroscopic properties such as Raman scattering. [41] The slight increase in the energy gap for  $C_{138}$  and  $C_{144}$  is due to a slight deviation of the C-C angle of two adjacent hexagon units from linearity ( $=176^\circ$ ). We note that all the

structures considered herein have a HOMO that is higher in energy than that of  $C_{60}$ , while the LUMOs are placed energetically lower. Thus, increasing the size of the fusing unit tends to lower the HOMO energy towards that of  $C_{60}$ , and pushing the LUMO away from that of  $C_{60}$  at the same time. This energetic ordering of the HOMO and LUMO levels accounts for a significant drop in the energy gap to 2.17 eV for  $C_{180}$ . Synthetic  $C_{180}$  is thus predicted to have a pronounced difference in electronic properties than  $C_{60}$ , and should at least be considered as semi-conductor. Whether further decrease in the band-gap due to increase in the size of the fused, connecting hexagon unit is possible, perhaps to eventual metallization, remains to be explored. Such a feat will undoubtedly demonstrates a clear pathway for a distinct manipulation of electronic properties as a function of size at the nano-scale level.

Finally, with both the HOMO and LUMO levels are negative for every member of the dumbbell-like structure in the series as shown in Table II, it is possible for each to support an anionic radical structure. Optimizations of such anionic structures were determined at the UB3LYP/6-31G\* level of theory. Table III lists the relative energies of these anions with respect to their corresponding neutral counterpart. While little structural differences in bonding appeared to be the norm, we note the increase in the electronic separation of these anions from the neutral species as a function of size. Although this separation is on the order of the HOMO-LUMO gap separation in the neutral species, it is also indicative of stabilization effect for these anions as the size of fused unit is increased.

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### Figures Caption:

Figure 1. (a) The optimized, symmetry – unique  $D_{3d}$  carbon-carbon bonds of  $C_{60}$  (in Å).

X denotes the  $C_3$  axis of symmetry. These unique centers are clearly indicated (shadows) in (b).

Figure 2. Calculated Raman scattering activities (in Å<sup>4</sup>/a.m.u) of  $D_{3d}$  and  $I_h$  structures of  $C_{60}$ .

Figure 3. Optimized dumbbell-like structures of  $C_{126}$ ,  $C_{132}$ ,  $C_{138}$ ,  $C_{144}$ , and  $C_{180}$ .

Figure 4. HOMO-LUMO separation (in eV) of  $C_{60}$ ,  $C_{126}$ ,  $C_{132}$ ,  $C_{138}$ ,  $C_{144}$ , and  $C_{180}$ .

**Table I.** Energetic of symmetry-constraints structures of C<sub>60</sub>.

Method	Total Energy	Relative Energy <sup>a</sup>		
	I <sub>h</sub>	D <sub>3d</sub>	D <sub>5d</sub>	S <sub>6</sub>
B3LYP/6-31G*	-2286.173080	-34.7	-26.0	-30.4
B3LYP/cc-pVDZ	-2286.314164	-39.0	-30.4	-30.4
BPW91/6-31G*	-2286.069710	-39.0	-30.4	-30.4

<sup>a</sup> in meV relative to I<sub>h</sub> structure.

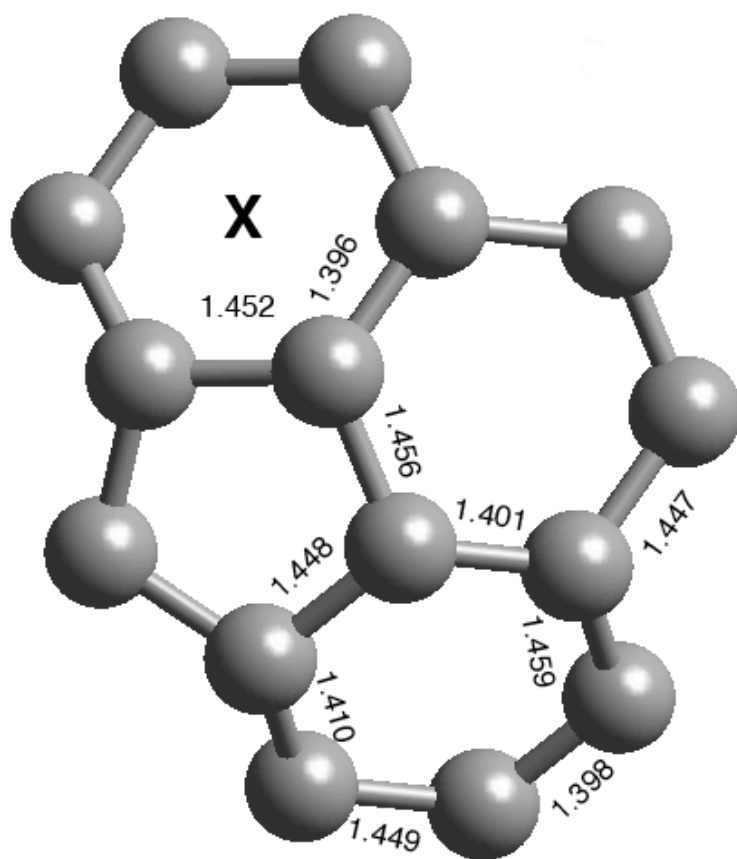


**Table II.** DFT- B3LYP/6-31G\* energetics and electronic properties of dumbbell structures (as in figure 3).

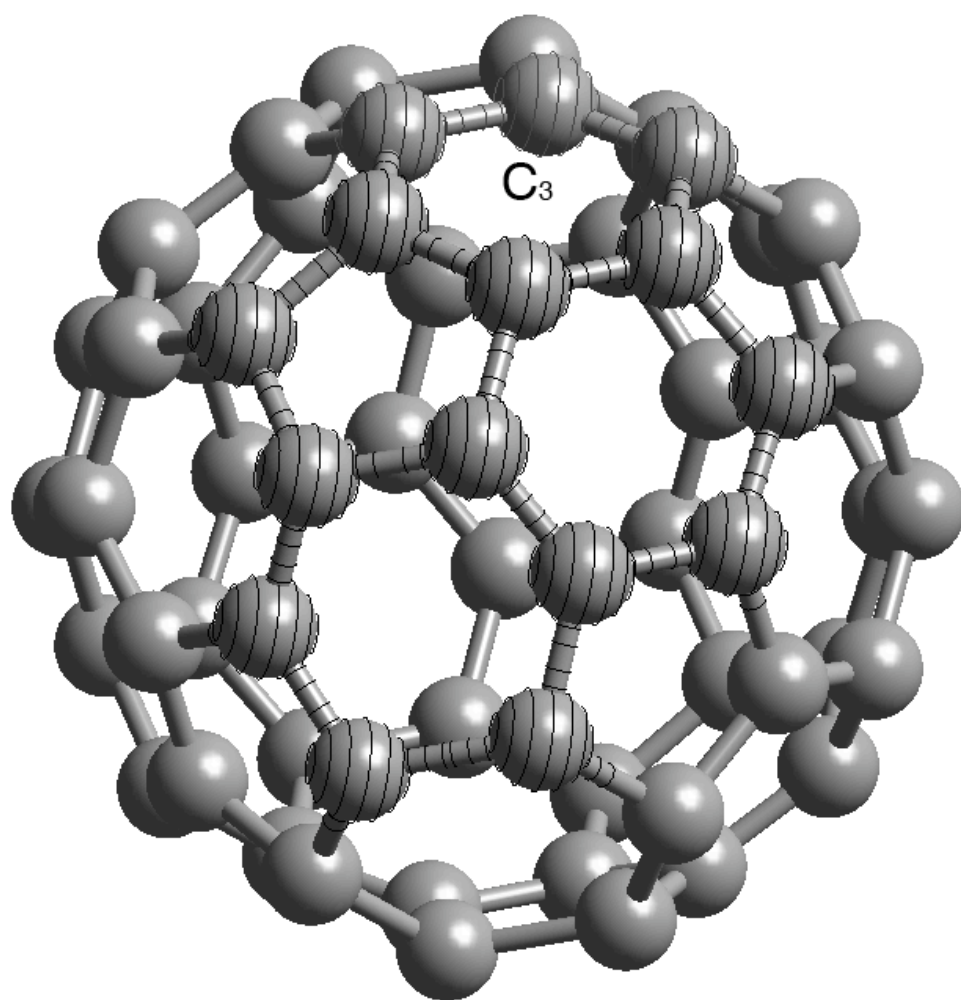
<b>Structure</b>	<b>HOMO (eV)</b>	<b>LUMO (eV)</b>	<b>Gap (eV)</b>	<b>Binding Energy (eV/atom)</b>
C <sub>126</sub>	-5.775	-3.426	2.35	6.87
C <sub>132</sub>	-5.815	-3.529	2.29	6.79
C <sub>138</sub>	-5.834	-3.472	2.36	6.73
C <sub>144</sub>	-5.850	-3.469	2.38	6.67
C <sub>180</sub>	-5.896	-3.730	2.17	6.38
C <sub>60</sub>	-5.986	-3.225	2.76	6.98

**Table III.** Calculated relative energies of radical anionic dumbbell structures.

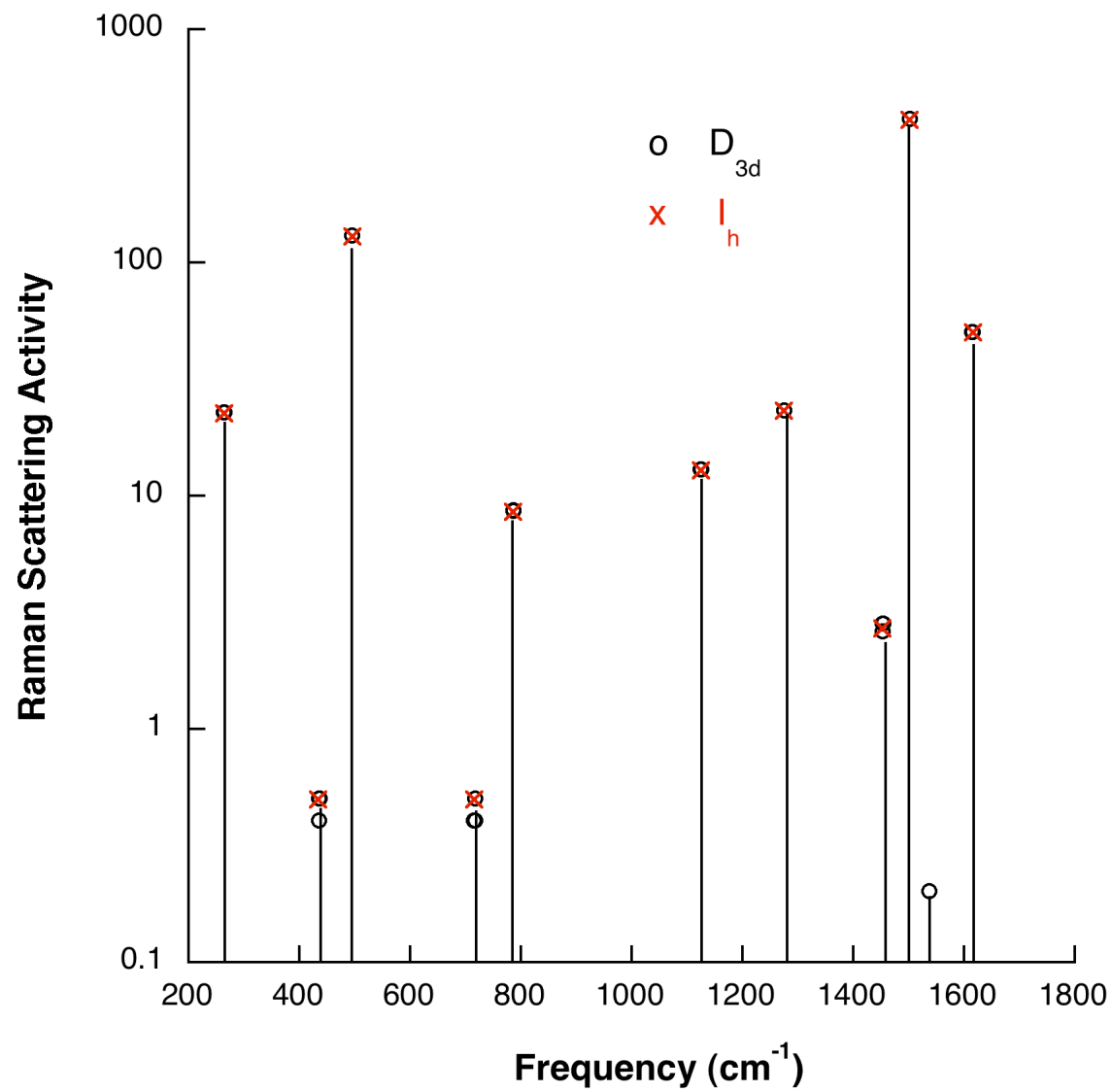
Anion	$\Delta E$ (eV)
$C_{126}^-$	2.58
$C_{132}^-$	2.73
$C_{138}^-$	2.68
$C_{144}^-$	2.71
$C_{180}^-$	3.06



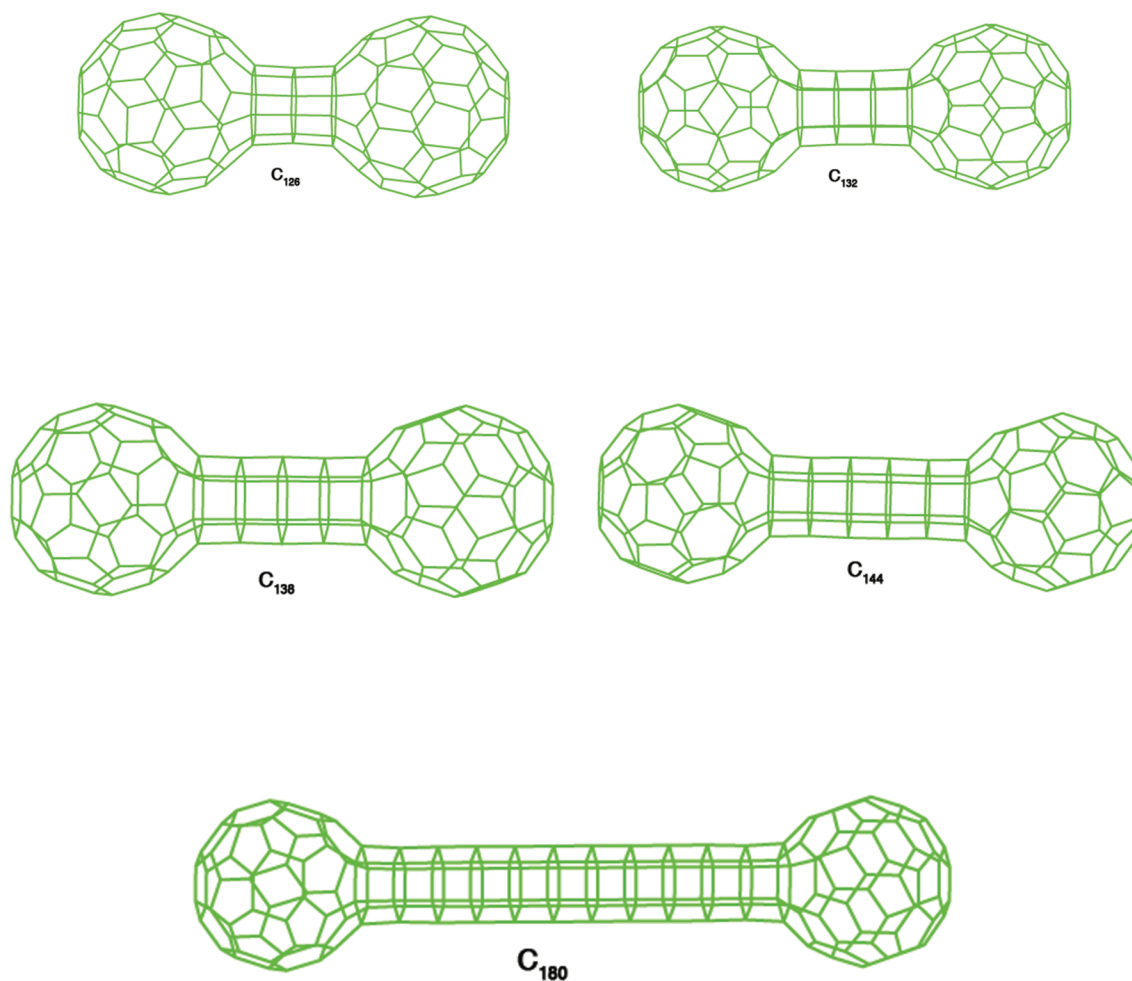
**Manaa : Figure 1a.**



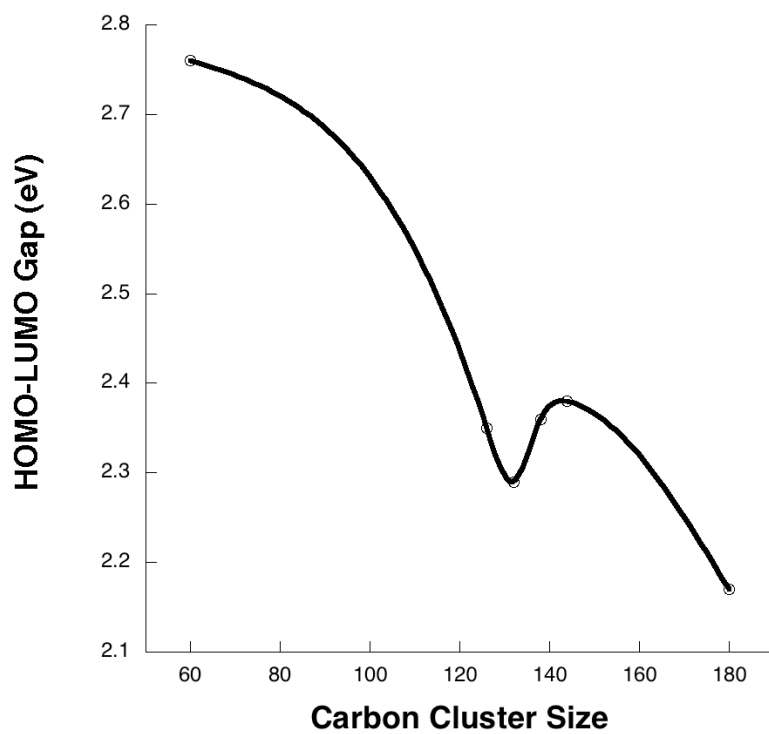
**Manaa: Figure 1b.**



Manaa: Figure 2.



**Manaa: Figure 3.**



**Manaa: Figure 4.**

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